



City of Somerville

PLANNING BOARD

City Hall 3rd Floor, 93 Highland Avenue, Somerville MA 02143

TO: Planning Board
FROM: OSPCD Staff
SUBJECT: 20-23 Cummings Street, ZP24-000046 & ZP24-000085
POSTED: February 28, 2025

RECOMMENDATION: No change

This memo is supplemental to the PPZ Staff Memo dated November 27, 2024, and the Mobility Division Staff memo dated November 27, 2024.

This supplemental memo identifies new and modified staff recommended conditions based on the discussions between the Planning Board and applicant for the above cases associated with 20-23 Cummings Street.

BACKGROUND

The two (2) applications for 20-23 Cummings Street were first opened for a public hearing with the Planning Board (the "Board") on December 5, 2024. Both applications are still in front of the Board at this time. The Board made several requests to the applicant and Staff to examine the parking program and building height. On February 25, 2025, the applicant provided Staff with an updated memo that responds to the requests made by the Planning Board. In response to discussions at the meetings and the updated memo provided by the applicant, Staff have made modifications to several previously recommended conditions to the Board. These revised and new conditions are outlined at the end of this memo with tracked changes.

ANALYSIS

PPZ Staff have tweaked conditions 10, 13, and 15 from the PPZ Staff Memo dated November 27, 2024. These modifications are in response to discussions with the applicant during the Board hearing process. The changes to conditions 10, 13, and 15 allow for flexibility for subsequent development review procedures but still provide oversight and review by the City at an administrative level with Planning Staff.

The applicant implemented design revisions, lowering the height of lab building 1 to 245 feet from an original 290 feet, and lab building 2 to 275 feet from 290 feet.

Simultaneously, they reduced the gross floor area of building 1 by 105,000 square feet and building 2 by 25,000 square feet. The reduced building heights will yield minor shadow impact reductions compared to the prior proposal. In response to these changes, the applicant has proposed the following changes in motor vehicle parking:

- Valet parking spaces will be reduced from 197 to 97
- Regular parking spaces will remain the same at 738

The Mobility Division continues to express concern about the potential for an excessive parking supply at this site, citing potential negative impacts on non-automobile travel modes, emissions reductions, and pedestrian/cyclist safety as outlined in SomerVision, Somerville Climate Forward, and the Vision Zero Action Plan. The initial recommendation from the Mobility Division would have prevented valet parking operations from increasing the parking supply beyond the striped capacity of the garages, while not affecting the size of the garages themselves.

Following discussions with the Applicant, the Mobility Division has updated the proposed parking conditions to align with parking ratios approved for similar recent projects. This represents a slight reduction in the overall parking supply compared to the initial proposal.

To accommodate this adjustment, Phases 1 and 2 of the project will be built with parking consistent with neighboring developments. Both phases will have access to the full capacity of the originally proposed self-park parking garages, along with a limited number of valet spaces.

If additional parking is desired for Phase 3, the Applicant may request an amendment to the Master Plan from the Planning Board. This will allow the Board to evaluate the actual traffic and parking demand generated by Phases 1 and 2, including the success of non-automobile travel modes, before approving any increase in the parking supply for Phase 3.

As the difference between the proposed and recommended parking supplies primarily involves valet parking, no additional construction is required to achieve the originally proposed parking capacity. Valet parking was intended to be an additional service beyond the striped capacity of the self-park garages.

PERMIT CONDITIONS

To facilitate the Board's review, Staff has compiled a new list of recommended conditions. This list incorporates revisions to existing conditions (shown with red track changes) and new conditions (in red text) resulting from discussions with the applicant and the Board, making it easier to identify all modifications.

Should the Board approve the required Master Plan Special Permit, PPZ Staff recommends the following conditions:

Permit Validity

1. This Decision must be recorded with the Middlesex South Registry of Deeds.
2. This MPSP certifies that development may proceed in accordance with the standards of the Assembly Square Mixed-Use district.
3. Applying for development review for any proposed thoroughfare, civic space, or building identified in the submitted Master Plan constitutes substantial use of this MPSP for the purpose of subsequent development entitlement.

4. All approvals are for property located outside the public right-of-way, which is at the discretion of the City.

Public Record

5. A digital copy of the recorded Decision stamped by the Middlesex South Registry of Deeds must be submitted to the Planning, Preservation & Zoning Division for the public record.
6. One (1) digital copy of all required application materials reflecting any physical changes required by the Board, if applicable, must be submitted to the Planning, Preservation & Zoning Division for the public record. Materials must be submitted in accordance with the document format standards of relevant Submittal Requirements.

Legal Agreements

7. The property owner(s) and all applicable future tenants must comply with the Master Mobility Management Plan dated February 29, 2024.
8. Thoroughfare lots must be dedicated to the public by a covenant or other deed restriction following completion of construction. Satisfaction of this condition must be approved by the City Solicitor.
9. Civic Space lots must be dedicated to the public by a covenant or other deed restriction following completion of construction. Satisfaction of this condition must be approved by the City Solicitor.

Development Permitting

10. Development must proceed as identified in Phase 1 (Section 1.10.1; Figure 1.14a Phasing Plan – Phase 1), Phase 2 (Section 1.10.2; Figure 1.14b Phasing Plan – Phase 2), and Phase 3 (Section 1.10.3; Figure 1.14c Phasing Plan – Phase 3) of the approved plan except that buildings 1, 2, or 3 may swap phases as a di minimis plan revision to be reviewed and approved by the Director of Planning, Preservation & Zoning.
11. Land platting must result in a number and general configuration of lots and rights-of-way that is substantially equivalent to Figure 1.6 – Proposed Lot Plan of the approved Master Plan.
12. Greystar Development East, LLC must post a performance bond for one hundred and twenty five percent (125%) of the total estimated costs to design and construct Civic Space 1, Civic Space w, and all conditioned transportation impact mitigation prior to applying for any building permit, streetscape construction permit, or civic space permit for development subject to the approved Master Plan.
13. Except as approved in writing by the Director of Planning, Preservation, & Zoning, Greystar Development East, LLC may not apply for Site Plan Approval of any thoroughfare, civic space, or building in a succeeding phase until all thoroughfares, civic spaces, or buildings have received a construction permit (BP, CSP, or SCP) for the proceeding phase.
14. If a period of one (1) year lapses between the Site Plan Approval required for any thoroughfare, civic space, or building types and the date of decision of the

preceding Site Plan Approval for any thoroughfare, civic space, or building type in the same phase, the Greystar Development East, LLC must update the Planning Board

Plan Revisions

15. Changes to the number or general configuration of lots; thoroughfares, civic spaces, or buildings; development phases; and the percentages of commercial floor area is a major amendment to the previously approved Master Plan and is permitted only as a revision to this MPSP except that buildings 1, 2, or 3 may swap phases as a di minimis plan revision to be reviewed and approved by the Director of Planning, Preservation & Zoning.

Thoroughfares

16. The general alignment, connectivity, right-of-way, and geometry of thoroughfares must be substantially equivalent to the thoroughfares shown in the approved Master Plan.

Civic Spaces

17. Civic Space 1 must include active recreational elements as part of the Civic Space programming.

Transportation Mitigation

18. To ~~mitigation~~ mitigate transportation impacts, the Applicant may be required to construct up to two (2) signalized intersections: at the intersection of Cummings Street and Middlesex Avenue and at the intersection of McGrath Highway and Middlesex Avenue. Final designs must be approved by relevant City Departments prior to applying for a Site Plan Approval for any of the proposed Thoroughfares. The Director of Mobility may waive this requirement at one or both intersections based on findings of additional analysis and final traffic circulation pattern.
19. Any signalized intersections construction must be coordinated with the existing signalized intersection at Middlesex Avenue and Foley Street.
20. The Applicant will prepare a signal warrant analyses and study multiple traffic control, intersection design, and street circulation options for Cummings Street, Middlesex Avenue, and McGrath Highway to be approved by relevant City Departments prior to applying for Site Plan Approval for Thoroughfare 1 and 2. Any street directional changes are subject to the approval of the Somerville Traffic Commission.
21. To mitigate transportation impacts, the Applicant must construct a 12-foot multi-use path from the existing crosswalk across Fellsway West up to and across Middlesex Avenue. Final alignment and design of the path portions located on Thoroughfare 1 must be reviewed during Site Plan Approval for Thoroughfare 1.
22. Final alignment and design of the 12-foot multi-use path portions located on Cummings Street or other publicly accessible property must be approved by relevant City Departments prior to applying for a Streetscape Construction Permit.

23. To ~~mitigation~~ mitigate transportation impacts, the Applicant must reconstruct Cumming Street to incorporate any directional change to the street and any shared alignment with the proposed twelve (12) foot multi-use path. Final design shall be approved by the relevant City Departments prior to applying for a Streetscape Construction Permit.
24. To ~~mitigation~~ mitigate transportation impacts, Applicant must reconstruct McGrath Highway from the edge of the development site to the centerline of the roadway. Reconstruction must incorporate any directional change to the street. Final design and scope shall be approved by the relevant City Departments prior to applying for a Streetscape Construction Permit.
25. To ~~mitigation~~ mitigate transportation impacts, the west side of Middlesex Avenue along the frontage of the site must be improve with a curb separated bike facility. This bike facility must be connected to adjacent bike facilities on the west side of Middlesex Avenue to the north and south of the site frontage. Final design shall be approved by the relevant City departments prior to applying for a Streetscape Construction Permit.
26. The Applicant must identify three locations for Bluebikes bike share stations required by their approved Mobility Management Plan via site plan with each Site Plan Approval application for buildings 1, 2, and 3.
27. The underground structured parking must be operated as a Commercial Parking facility principal use.
28. To ~~mitigation~~ mitigate transportation impacts, ~~a total of 738~~ a maximum parking ratio of 0.7 per 1000 square feet of below-grade vehicular parking spaces is permitted as part of Building 1 and phase 1, inclusive of both self-park and valet parking spaces. Additional valet spaces are prohibited.
29. To mitigate transportation impacts, a maximum parking ratio of 0.7 per 1000 square feet of below-grade vehicular parking spaces is permitted as part of Building 2 and phase 2, inclusive of both self-park and valet parking spaces.
30. Valet parking operations must cease operation after December 31st, 2039.
31. The proposed twelve (12) foot multi-use path that is adjacent to Building 1, ~~and~~ Thoroughfare 1 and Cummings Street must be constructed during phase 1 of development.